

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 115351

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OCLR, CVIS, NO, UR, US

SUBJECT:SHORE LEAVE FOR CREWS OF US MERCHANT VESSELS

RE:MOSCOW 6609; LENINGRAD 581 AND PREVIOUS

1. APPRECIATE POSTS REPORTING ON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY
US MERCHANT SHIPS IN LENINGRAD IN GETTING THEIR CREWS
ASHORE. ADDITIONAL CASES OF US-FLAGSHIPS, MANHATTAN AND
TRANSEASTERN, IN BLACK SEA PORTS HAVE COME TO OUR ATTENTION
(REPORTED SEPARATELY). THESE PROBLEMS UNDERSCORE DISPARITY
IN TREATMENT OF CREW LIST VISAS BY US AND SOVIET GOVERN-
MENTS. IN TWO CASES--ZAPATA RANGER AND CARTER BRAXTON--
IT APPEARS THAT SHIPOWNERS FAILED TO OBTAIN CREW LIST VISAS.
IN OTHER CASES, HOWEVER, FAULT LIES WITH LABORIOUS SOVIET
VISA PROCEDURES.

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2. FOLLOWING ARE STEPS WHICH US SHIPOWNERS MUST TAKE TO
OBTAIN SOVIET CREW LIST VISA:

1. OWNER MAILES CREW LIST TO CONSULAR SECTION OF SOVIET
EMBASSY WITH STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE;

2. SOVIET EMBASSY VALIDATES CREW LIST AND MAILES IT BACK

TO SHIP OWNERS;

3. OWNER SENDS CREW LIST VIA INTERNATIONAL MAIL TO SOVIET
PORT AUTHORITIES.

ON AVERAGE IT TAKES TEN DAYS FROM DATE SHIPOWNER SENDS OFF
CREWLIST TO SOVIET EMBASSY TO THE DATE HE RECEIVES IT BACK
WITH EMBASSY VALIDATION. IT TAKES IN ADDITION AT LEAST
TEN DAYS FOR VISAED CREW LIST TO REACH SOVIET PORT
AUTHORITIES.

3. AS EXAMPLE, HERE ARE RELEVANT DATES FOR GULF KNIGHT:

APRIL 11--CREW LIST MAILED FROM NEW ORLEANS AND SHIP SAILS;

APRIL 26--CREW LIST RECEIVED BACK FROM SOVIET EMBASSY AND
MAILED TO USSR THE SAME DAY;

APRIL 29--SHIP ARRIVES LENINGRAD; CREW NOT ALLOWED ASHORE;

MAY 11--VISAED CREW LIST ARRIVES LENINGRAD.

APRIL 11, THE DAY THE SHIP SAILED FROM NEW ORLEANS, WAS
ALSO THE EARLIEST DATE ON WHICH SHIPOWNER HAD COMPLETE LIST
OF CREW, BECAUSE OF LAST-MINUTE HIRINGS. SHIPOWNER INITI-
ATED VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURES ALMOST THREE WEEKS BEFORE
SHIP'S ARRIVAL IN LENINGRAD, YET THE CREW WAS STILL NOT
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ABLE TO GO ASHORE UPON ARRIVAL. POSTS WILL NOTE THAT
RESPONSIBILITY FOR OBTAINING AND SENDING CREW LIST VISAS
RESTS ALMOST ENTIRELY WITH US SHIPOWNER. ROLE OF SOVIET
EMBASSY AMOUNTS TO RUBBER-STAMP OPERATION.

4. THIS CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH POSTS' OWN HEAVY WORKLOAD
OF TRANSCRIBING AND TELEGRAPHING HUNDREDS OF SOVIET SHIPS'
LISTS TO WASHINGTON AND DIRECTLY TO US PORTS OF ENTRY.
RESPONSIBILITY OF SOVIET SHIPPING COMPANIES IS CONFINED
MERELY TO SENDING CREW LISTS TO EMBASSY OR CONGEN. IN
ADDITION SOVIETS HAVE AND MAKE USE OF OPTION OF OBTAINING
CREW LIST VISAS FROM ANY US POST WHICH ISSUES VISAS. IT
SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS IS A SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WORKED
OUT BY USG ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE.

5. IN ADDITION TO OBVIOUS INEQUITY IN WAY CREW LIST VISAS
ARE HANDLED BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, US SHIPOWNERS ARE LIABLE
TO PAY ADDITIONAL MONEY TO CREWMEMBERS AS "CONFINEMENT PAY"
IF THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED ASHORE. ZAPATA STATES THAT FOR ITS

SHIPS AMOUNT WOULD BE ABOUT 3,500 DOLLARS PER DAY. OWNER

OF MANHATTAN, WHICH IS LARGER SHIP, ESTIMATES DAILY AMOUNT FOR HIS SHIP WOULD BE ABOUT 4,300 DOLLARS.

6. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO EXPLORE WAYS OF ENDING THE DISPARITY WHICH PRESENTLY EXISTS IN HANDLING OF CREW LIST VISAS SO THAT US CREWS MAY BE ASSURED OF SHORE LEAVE AND SHIPOWNERS WILL NOT BE LIABLE FOR ADDITIONAL PAY COSTS. DEPARTMENT ALSO BELIEVES THIS TO BE APPROPRIATE MOMENT TO RESOLVE PROBLEM OF PASSENGERS ON LYKES BROTHERS CARGO VESSELS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOWED ASHORE BY SOVIETS. DEPARTMENT THEREFORE WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS AND PROPOSE THAT SOVIET EMBASSY ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSMISSION OF VALIDATED CREW LISTS TO SOVIET PORT AUTHORITIES, AS US POSTS DO FOR SOVIET CREW LISTS, AND THAT SOVIET AGREE TO ISSUE AND HONOR VISAS
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TO AMERICAN CITIZENS TRAVELING ON CARGO SHIPS AS PASSENGERS TO THE SOVIET UNION. IF EMBASSY UNWILLING TO TAKE THESE MEASURES, DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER ENDING SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH IS BURDENSOME TO POSTS AND LEAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SENDING SOVIET CREW LISTS TO US IN HANDS OF SOVIET SHIPPING COMPANIES.

7. BEFORE CALLING IN SOVIETS, DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE POSTS' COMMENTS ON THIS APPROACH. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HAVE POSTS' ESTIMATES OF RESOURCES, IN TERMS OF MAN-HOURS (AMERICAN AND LOCAL) AND USE OF COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, WHICH ARE DEVOTED TO THE PROCESSING OF SOVIET CREW LISTS.

8. FYI. RE: MOSCOW 6609 PARA 1, MARITIME AGREEMENT ITSELF DOES NOT STIPULATE PROCEDURES WHICH SHALL APPLY TO CREW LIST VISAS. VISA PROCEDURES OF THE US AND THE USSR ARE SET FORTH IN RESPECTIVE PORT MEMORANDA OF THE TWO COUNTRIES WHICH ARE UNILATERAL DOCUMENTS AND ARE NOT INTEGRALLY CONNECTED TO THE MARITIME AGREEMENT. END FYI. CHRISTOPHER

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